

CLEAR PATH

by Mark Steere

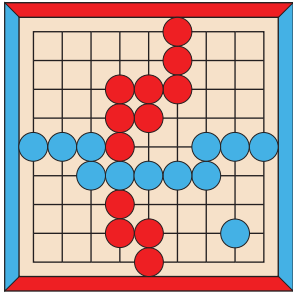


Figure 1
Blue wins

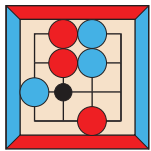


Figure 2
Illegal

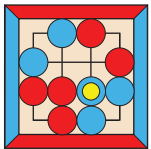


Figure 3a

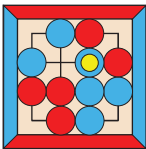


Figure 3b

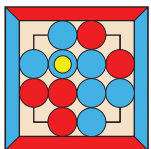


Figure 3c

INTRODUCTION

Clear Path is a two-player connection game played on a square grid of any size, initially empty. The top and bottom board edges are colored red. The left and right edges are colored blue. The two players, Red and Blue, take turns placing their own stones onto unoccupied points, at least one stone per turn, starting with Red. Passing is not allowed. You should always have a legal placement or legal series of placements available. Clear Path uses the pie rule. Mark Steere designed Clear Path in March 2026.

OIP: Orthogonally (horizontally and/or vertically) Interconnected Path.

ODIP: Ortho-diagonally (horizontally, vertically, and/or diagonally) Interconnected Path.

OBJECT OF THE GAME

You win if you form an OIP of your stones touching the two opposite edges of your color. In **Figure 1**, Blue has won.

CLEAR PATH RULE (SINGLE PLACEMENT TURN)

You aren't allowed to completely block your opponent from connecting his two edges, unless you simultaneously form a winning path of your stones. In other words, you can't form an ODIP connecting your edges unless in doing so you also form an OIP connecting your edges. In **Figure 2**, Red is not allowed to place a stone on the point marked with a black dot. If Red did place a stone there, he would form an ODIP of his stones connecting his edges, while not forming an OIP connecting his edges.

CHAIN REACTION

If you begin your turn by placing on a point which is orthogonally surrounded on 3 or 4 sides by stones and/or edges, you must then immediately place another stone. If this next stone is also placed on a point so surrounded, you must then place yet another stone. And so on. Once you place on a point not so surrounded, your turn is concluded.

CLEAR PATH RULE (MULTIPLE PLACEMENT TURN)

On the **FINAL PLACEMENT** of a multiple placement turn, you must not have formed an ODIP connecting your edges while not having formed an OIP connecting your edges. In **Figure 3c**, Blue has formed an OIP connecting his edges, winning the game. [Note that in **Figure 3b**, Blue has blocked Red while not winning yet. This is fine because after his **FINAL PLACEMENT**, Blue has formed an OIP connecting his edges.]

DESIGN NOTES

Clear Path is the first OOSCG (Orthogonal Only Square Connection Game) to use the clear path rule to prevent deadlocks (a position from which neither player can win). The notion of a clear path based OOSCG has been around for a long time, but none have been successfully implemented before now. Standard OOSCGs prevent deadlocks by using various means to prevent crosscuts (a 2x2 area with two blue stones diagonally opposite from one another and two red stones diagonally opposite from one another).

The key to Clear Path's success was the Chain Reaction mechanism, which I borrowed from my earlier design, Flume (2010).

AUTHOR'S NOTE

Feel free to publish this rule sheet and to program the game of Clear Path. No licensing fee or royalties are expected. However, please don't change the name or the rules, and please attribute the game to me, Mark Steere. My other games can be found at marksteeregames.com.